

URBAN DESIGN STANDARDS

Goals

- Maintain positive qualities of the street
- Maintain the mixed-use nature of the corridor
- Improve the sidewalk/pedestrian experience
- Improve the image and character of the corridor

Create a series of urban design standards to shape future development (and redevelopment) along Prospect Street. Such standards would address building design, site design, and landscaping and would aim to improve the image of the corridor and enhance the pedestrian experience. Such standards are typically implemented by creating an overlay district where they apply. Examples around the city include North Massachusetts Avenue, Central Square, Harvard Square, Memorial Drive, and the Parkway Overlay Districts along Concord Avenue and Alewife Brook Parkway.

A Prospect Street Overlay would span approximately 100 feet on either side of the street the length of the corridor, except the area included within the Central Square Overlay, and would include the following key elements:

OBJECTIVES	RECOMMENDATIONS
1. Create a mechanism to improve urban design and image of the street	Designate the corridor as an area of special planning concern. For future development or change of use of 2,000 square feet or more, a public meeting and non-binding development consultation are required.
2. Allow the mix of uses to continue, but with improved urban design. Most auto-oriented uses permitted in the corridor already require a special permit	Uses such as service/repair of cars should be shielded visually and acoustically from neighboring development.
3. Improve pedestrian experience by encouraging trees, landscaping, and widened sidewalks in conjunction with future development	Create a 3-foot minimum front yard requirement along Prospect Street and side street frontages in business districts, which could be either landscaped or added to the sidewalk.
	Require 15% open space coverage (green area or sidewalk) on lots with commercial uses.
	Require one tree for every 25 feet in the front yard or on city sidewalk.
4. Reduce surface parking along the sidewalk or create landscaped buffers	Prohibit parking between the building and the street/sidewalk.
	Require 10' minimum landscaped buffer between surface parking and the property line.
	Do not require accessory parking for retail uses; reduce or eliminate loading requirement for retail uses. This provision is currently in place for very small retail uses that would require four parking spaces or less.

OBJECTIVES	RECOMMENDATIONS
5. Encourage active ground floors to continue to maintain a vibrant and safe street	Require active uses (residential, office, retail business, institutional) at the ground floor. Require 50% clear glass on the façade for commercial uses, 25% for residential uses.
6. Reduce number and width of curb cuts in future development	Allow either one two-way access drive and curb cut per lot, maximum width of 30 feet in commercial and 20 feet in residential districts, or two one-way access drives, maximum width of 15 feet in commercial and 10 feet in residential districts.

STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS

There is a desire to see streetscape improvements along the Prospect Street corridor that address the image of the street including elements such as lighting, landscaping, street furniture, drainage improvements, and that improve accessibility. The cost and magnitude of such improvements imply that they would occur over the long term of ten years or more. However, smaller scale interventions could be implemented over the short term (two to five years) that would improve the pedestrian environment and image of the Avenue. These include the following:

1. Tree planting – Additional street trees and trees on private property adjacent to the sidewalk would improve the pedestrian environment by adding green, creating shade as the trees mature, and buffering pedestrians from traffic on the street. A preliminary set of potential locations has been identified. Planting would occur over time in conjunction with future development. City staff will also work to identify funding opportunities for tree planting through state and private grant sources, local businesses, and the City's capital budget.
2. Street furniture – Small changes to existing street furniture such as shifting the location of a bench or trash cans, where such a change might improve pedestrian flow (e.g. at the corner of Harvard and Prospect Streets). The City would also initiate conversation with property owners along the street where a bench or tree might be accommodated on private property adjacent to the sidewalk (e.g. at the N-Star site and the corner of Broadway and Prospect Streets).
3. Repaving – Planned repaving of Prospect Street will result in a smoother roadway surface, improved crosswalks and lane markings, and reduced traffic noise.

EXISTING CITY PROGRAMS

The City offers a variety of programs to help residents, business owners, and landlords improve their properties. Information on relevant programs that provide assistance for business façade, lighting, and signage improvements, historic preservation and home improvements for income qualified households, and tree planting assistance will be provided to property owners through mailings and in-person outreach by City staff.

Programs for Businesses	Information
<u>Façade / Signage & Lighting Improvement Program</u> Design assistance and matching grants of up to \$35,000 for building façade improvements and up to \$3,500 for signage and exterior lighting improvements.	Community Development Department Economic Development Division 617-349-4637 www.cambridgema.gov/cdd/ed
<u>Best Retail Practices Program</u> Workshops, technical assistance and grants for improvements to interior spaces.	Community Development Department Economic Development Division 617-349-4637 www.cambridgema.gov/cdd/ed
Programs for Residential Property Owners	Information
<u>Home Improvement Program</u> Low-interest, deferrable loans for improvements to low- or moderate-income homeowners or rental properties with affordable rents.	Community Development Department Housing Division (with Just-A-Start, Inc. and Homeowners Rehab, Inc.) 617-349-4622 www.cambridgema.gov/cdd/hsg
<u>Historic Preservation Grants</u> Grants to low- or moderate-income homeowners for exterior renovations.	Cambridge Historical Commission 617-349-4683 www.cambridgema.gov/historic/grants.html
General Programs	Information
<u>Client Tree Program</u> Residents, business owners, and property owners can request that the city plant a new tree on or within 10 feet of the sidewalk near their property. The resident or owner's contribution is \$140 per tree, which covers part of the tree planting cost.	Department of Public Works Urban Forestry Program 617-349-4051 www.cambridgema.gov/theworks/departments/parks/forestry.html cambridgetree@cambridgema.gov